

Dragons come through in the clutch

Written by Kyle Arnoldy

Holyoke's boys' basketball team extended their winning streak to four over the weekend, picking up wins against Merino and Wray.

Each game came down to the wire with Holyoke holding on for the victory. HHS has had success this season in close matches as all six of their wins have come by single digits.

The team was without Brett Cumming during the games. Cumming, who has started every game this year up until Friday, was out after having surgery to remove his gallbladder.

HHS now has a 6-4 record and a 2-2 record in conference.



Tito Fierro gets past a Wray defender for two of his game-high 14 points in Saturday's match. —Enterprise photo

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Holyoke 65, Merino 60

It appeared as though the Dragons were going to walk away with a lopsided victory early in Friday's match against Merino.

Out of the gates, HHS came out hot. Holyoke piled on the points in the first quarter, scoring 18 while holding Merino to just seven. The Dragons held the Rams to long stretches of offensive ineffectiveness that allowed HHS to pull out to a commanding lead.

In the second quarter, the offensive surge from Holyoke slowed down a bit, giving Merino opportunity to make it a game. Logan Tharp's three as time dwindled down gave the Dragons a 29-21 lead heading into half.

Holyoke added to their lead in the third quarter, limiting Merino to 13 points while they scored 18.

Turnovers in the final quarter hurt the Dragons. Head coach Scott Dille noted that the team had a tendency to shoot the ball too quickly in the fourth quarter with the lead.

The Rams rattled off 26 points in the final eight minutes while Holyoke scored 18. Merino came within four points but the Dragons held on to the lead, thanks in part to eight-of-12 shooting at the line, for the 65-60 victory.

"Friday night I was really pleased with the focus of the team," Dille said. "We really worked on the defensive end and did what we needed to do. The only thing I would like to improve is just how we finish the game. We haven't played ahead really this whole year, we have been coming from behind mainly, so just learning how to play ahead."

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Four Dragons scored in double digits Friday night. Tharp led the way with 21, Logan Zeiler had 13 and Tito Fierro and Deyten Klein had 10 apiece.

Tharp also led the team with seven assists and seven rebounds. Klein also tallied seven rebounds along with three steals.

Holyoke 40, Wray 39

Saturday's match against Wray was a back-and-forth battle as the two teams exchanged buckets for most of the first half.

After the first quarter, the two teams were knotted up at eight points. Holyoke struggled against the Wray zone defense, often settling for outside shots. Coach Dille stated that the team just wasn't aggressive enough on offense as they let Wray dictate the tempo of the game.

In the second quarter the Dragons began to attack the paint a little more, which in turn opened up clear looks at the basket. Holyoke managed to pick up 12 points in the period, but entered half down 20-24.

The two squads continued to trade baskets in the third quarter as each team scored 13 points.

Fierro put the Dragons on his back in the fourth quarter, scoring all of the team's seven points in the quarter.

With :13 left in the game and HHS down just a point, Fierro grabbed the loose ball after a Holyoke missed shot and connected on a turnaround jump shot in the lane, giving the Dragons their first lead of the half.

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The basket also marked the end of a five-minute dry spell where neither team made a basket. In fact, Wray was held scoreless for the final 6:54 of the game.

Coach Dille praised his team for their late-game efforts, noting that “they have been really composed and just keep playing regardless of score, time and situation. They haven’t shown any signs of feeling pressured down the stretch.”

Fierro had a solid all-around game, leading the Dragons with 14 points, seven rebounds and two steals. Tharp chipped in with 10 points and three assists.

Upcoming action

Holyoke will host Wiggins on Friday starting at 4 p.m. Tuesday’s match with Yuma has been pushed back to Tuesday, Feb. 19.

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